

Message Text

SECRET

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14

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 NIC-01 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6610

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USARPAC

CINCPACAF

CINCPACFLT

S E C R E T HONG KONG 3625

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652 : XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJ: THE REHABILITATION OF TENG HSIAO- PING

REF: HONG KONG 1235

SUMMARY. THE REHABILITATION OF NUMBER- TWO RANKING CULTURAL
REVOLUTION VICTIM TENG HSIAO- PING IS AN IMPORTANT ADVANCE FOR
MAO AND CHOU IN FORMING A NEW COALITION AT THE TOP. END
SUMMARY.

1. IN THE BIGGEST PUBLIC EVENT IN CHINA' S INTERNAL POLITICS
SINCE THE FALL OF LIN PIAO IN 1971, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION' S
NUMBER- TWO TANKING VICTIM, TENG HSIAO- PING, WAS REHABILITATED
IN PEKING APRIL 12. MARKING HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN MORE THAN
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SIX YEARS, THE FORMER PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL REJOINED THE REGIME'
S
LEADERS AT A GRAND BANQUET IN PEKING FOR SIHANOUK. HE WAS
IDENTIFIED BY NCNA WITH HIS OLD TITLE AS ONE OF CHOU EN- LAI' S
VICE PREMIERS. ONLY CHIANG CHING, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION
TERROR, WAS ABSENT FROM THE TURNOUT OF ACTIVE REGIME FIGURES
WHO HEARD CHOU, OSTENSIBLY SPEAKING OF SIHANOUK, UNMISTAKEABLY
ALLUDE TO TENG AS " AN OUTSTANDING PATRIOT" AND ONE WHO HAD
" SHOULDERED WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES AND MADE REMARKABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS."

2. NEITHER THE REHABILITATION NOR CHOU' S SENTIMENTS CAME AS A
SURPRISE. SIMILAR WORDS IN JUDGEMENT ON TENG APPEARED JUST A
YEAR AGO IN INTELLIGENCE REPORTS CENTERING AROUND DISCUSSIONS
BETWEEN CHOU AND TENG, AND A PARTY DOCUMENT CALLING FOR THE
REHABILITATION OF TENG AND CERTAIN OTHER SENIOR CADRE PURGED
ALONG WITH LIU SHAO- CHI. THE DOCUMENT ARGUED THAT THE
SERVICES OF THESE VETERANS WERE VITALLY NEEDED TO REBUILD THE
REGIME' S TOP LEADERSHIP. WITHOUT THEM IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO
CONVENE THE NATIONAL PEOPLE' S CONGRESS AND TO HOLD A NEW PARTY
CONGRESS. IN SUBWQUENT EVENTS ACROSS THE NATION, VETERAN CADRE
WHO HAD BEEN DISGRACED OR ECLIPSED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTON AS
ALLEGED " RIGHTISTS" HAVE REEMERGED AND TAKEN UP LEADING POSTS
AGAIN. THEIR REHABILITATION HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT
REASSURANCE TO LOWER LEVEL CADRE, DISORIENTED BY THE LIN AFFAIR,
THAT THE CENTER IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS PRESENT MODERATE POLICIES
AND EXPECTS CADRE TO CARRY THEM OUT WITH REAL COMMITMENT.

3. THERE HAS BEEN AN EXTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO PREPARE PUBLIC
OPINION FOR THESE RHABILITATIONS, AND THE CENTRAL THEME OF THIS
CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN TO DRAW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE NKIMES OF
" SWINDLERS LIKE LIU SHAO- CHI" (THE LIN PIAO GROUP) AND THE MISTAKES
OF OTHERS. JUST WHERE TO DRAW THAT LINE IS STILL CONTROVERSIAL
IN CHINA. THERE ARE HEATED DEBATES AT PRESENT OVER WHO THE
TARGETS OF CRITICISM SHOULD BE, AND WHILE THE MILITARY STRONGMEN
HAVE MADE ROOM FOR THE REHABILITATED IN THE PROVINCIAL RULING
GROUPS, THEY HAVE PROBABLY DONE SO WITH IMPERFECT GOOD GRACE
AND ENTHUSIASM.

4. BUT, IN THE EVENT, THE REHABILITATED CADRE NOW HAVE A MAJOR
NATIONAL SYMBOL OF THE FAVORABLE TREND IN THEIR STATUS, AND A
POTENTIAL STANDARD BEARER AT THE CENTER FOR THE PRAGMATIC POLICIES
THEY ARE BEING TOLD, DESPITE THEIR FEARS, TO CARRY OUT ONCE
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AGAIN. WHETHER THESE CADRE IDENTIFY WITH TENG ENOUGH TO CONSTITUTE A DECISIVE FACTION WITHIN THE REGIME REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT THERE ARE OLD TIES AND LOYALTIES IMPORTANTLY AT WORK BEHIND THE SCENES. IN ACCOMMODATING TENG AND WHATEVER FORCES HE REPRESENTS BACK INTO THE REGIME, MORE THAN JUSTICE AND IDEOLOGICAL REFORM IS INVOLVED. POWER IN SOME MEASURE IS CHANGING HANDS. THE LEFTISTS MAY HAVE PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AT LEAST AT THE CENTER.

5. FOR MAO AND CHOU, THE RETURN OF TENG IS A MILESTONE IN THEIR STRATEGY FOR FORMING A NEW RULING COALITION AND FORMALIZING THE REGIME'S REBUILDING AT THE TOP. THE TIME MAY HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED RIPE FOR TENG'S REHABILITATION BECAUSE OF PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN LOOSENING THE MILITARY'S GRIP ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS, IN REASSIGNING OTHER REHABILITATED CADRE (ALTHOUGH IMPORTANT FIGURES LIKE LO JUI-CHING REMAIN YET IN THE WINGS), AND IN REBUILDING MASS ORGANIZATIONS. TENG'S REAPPEARANCE WILL FUEL SPECULATION THAT A PARTY CONGRESS OR NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS IS IMMINENT, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT PLANNING FOR THESE EVENTS HAS INDEED ENTERED A NEW STAGE.

6. BUT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO ASSESS TENG'S REHABILITATION AS MORE THAN AN IMPORTANT ADVANCE IN THAT DIRECTION. WE WOULD EXPECT MAO AND CHOU TO TEST THE AIR A BIT BEFORE PROCEEDING. THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF TENG'S REHABILITATION HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED AND IT REMAINS TO BE SHOWN HOW MUCH AUTHORITY AND WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES HE IS TO HAVE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE DECISION ON TENG HAS AN IMPORTANT CONSENSUS BEHIND IT, ALTHOUGH THE RIVALRIES AMONG THE POWERHOLDERS HAVE NOT BEEN PUT ASIDE AND THE REGIME'S EQUILIBRIUM REMAINS UNCERTAIN TO AN IMPORTANT DEGREE. TENG'S CASE ITSELF ILLUSTRATES THE PROVISIONAL, SPECIAL NATURE OF THE ARRANGEMENTS BY WHICH THE COUNTRY IS BEING RULED. A WOULD-BE SUICIDE IN 1967, AND EXCLUDED FROM THE PRESENT CENTRAL COMMITTEE, TENG RETURNS AT 69 TO REJOIN FOUR OTHER BATTLE-SCARRED VICE PREMIERS OF LIKE OR GREATER AGE. WHATEVER HIS CONTRIBUTION, TENG'S RETURN IS FOR A LIMITED ENGAGEMENT.

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